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Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1233 (1999), by which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed and to submit a report on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). Subsequently, in paragraph 11 of its resolution 1580 (2004), the Council requested me to submit a written report to it every three months.

2. The present report focuses on developments since my last report (S/2007/715), dated 6 December 2007; in particular it provides details on progress in the various resource mobilization efforts by the Government.

II. Political developments

3. During the first ordinary session of Parliament, held from 19 November to 19 December 2007, the National Assembly approved the Government programme and the 2007 and 2008 budgets. This endorsement lent significant political legitimacy to the Government of Prime Minister Martinho N'Dafa Cabi, dispelling doubts about the viability of a Government based on the political and government stability pact signed by three political parties on 12 March 2007. However, on 29 February 2008, the President of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Carlos Gomes Jr., issued a statement announcing the withdrawal of the party's political confidence in the Prime Minister over issues of internal discipline.

4. On 13 December 2007, the National Assembly unanimously approved draft legislation granting amnesty to those involved in "political-military motivated crimes and infractions" against the security of the State up to 6 October 2004. The draft law has been submitted for review to the parliamentary permanent special commission on human rights, legal and constitutional affairs. The commission is expected to revert to the National Assembly during the second ordinary session, scheduled for 28 February to 26 March 2008. Although the draft law proposes granting amnesty to all those involved in political-military interventions, it does not

preclude future civil lawsuits and also makes provision for compensation for victims and their families. In the context of Security Council resolution 1580 (2004), UNOGBIS raised the issues of justice and impunity with the authorities and organized training to provide parliamentarians with practical tools to debate the amnesty bill. Proponents of the amnesty law, including the President, João Bernardo Vieira, and the Chief of the General Staff, argued that it would facilitate reconciliation and pave the way for the planned security sector reform. Civil society organizations, on the other hand, while recognizing the positive impact that it might have on national reconciliation, considered that there should have been broader involvement of civil society in the debate and that the issues of truth and restorative justice were not sufficiently addressed.

5. On 26 January 2008, the President of the Supreme Court, Maria do Céu Monteiro, was overwhelmingly re-elected by an electoral college of her peers, consisting of nine Supreme Court judges. The Supreme Court is the final authority on constitutional, administrative and legal matters. It plays a crucial role in electoral disputes, and is the court of final appeal in the event of challenges to the electoral results announced by the National Electoral Commission. The election was mired in controversy over the interpretation of two pieces of legislation, one of which provided for a restricted electoral college, while the other (more recent law of 2002) provided for a wider electoral college consisting of about 100 judges from the various judicial institutions. Ms. Monteiro's main rival, Emílio Kafft Kosta, a judge of the Supreme Court, boycotted the election. His protest to the election commission was rejected. Critics stated that the election was a serious blow to the rule of law and complained of political interference in the process.

6. Following the recommendations of a United Nations electoral assistance mission to Guinea-Bissau late in 2007, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has finalized a project document to provide support for the 2008-2010 electoral cycle, which includes the 2008 legislative elections and the presidential elections scheduled for 2010. UNDP and the Government are also engaged in discussions on the electoral budget and voter registration methodology. UNDP has proposed a budget of US$ 4.7 million for the legislative elections. Electoral assistance through the United Nations will be financed through a multi-donor fund managed by UNDP. So far the equivalent of $1.2 million has been secured: $887,000 from the European Commission and $272,500 from UNDP. The UNDP project provides for the issuing of biometric voter identification cards, as used in the recent elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Togo, on the grounds of enhanced technical efficiency, cost reduction in the medium and long term, and increased reliability of the electoral roll, thus enhancing the credibility of the system. The UNDP budget does not include the payment of arrears owed to the national and regional electoral commissions accumulated from past elections, estimated at $1.7 million. The cost of voter registration in the diaspora and the salaries of government officials in charge of the electoral process, amounting to $2 million, are also not included in the current budgetary estimates. The authorities have yet to set a date for the legislative elections.

7. The Chief of the General Staff, General Tagme Na Waie, in comments broadcasted at the end of January, warned politicians to respect the results of the forthcoming elections or face arrest. His comments were criticized as inopportune by the National Civil Society Movement for Peace, Democracy and Development. The Movement urged the military not to interfere in political and legal matters, and

also called on the international community to continue to closely follow political and social developments in the country.

8. Following consultations with the Social Renewal Party (PRS), the Government announced a partial Cabinet reshuffle on 12 January, involving four posts, three of which are held by PRS appointees. PAIGC and the United Social Democratic Party (PUSD) did not propose further changes affecting posts held by members of their parties. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court, in a ruling on 15 February, confirmed Kumba Yalá as winner in the PRS leadership contest in August 2007. For its part, PAIGC will convene its congress, during which, among other things, a leadership election will be held, from 3 to 6 April.

9. The participative dialogue programme led by the National Institute for Studies and Research and Interpeace — Voz di Paz/Voice of Peace — launched in February 2008 its research on the root causes of conflict through grass-roots consultations in 38 constituencies. Four meetings involving approximately 50 to 60 participants each were held on subjects of specific interest in the towns of Gabú, Quinhamel, Canchungo and Buba in February. Designed to hear the views of the population on local and national issues, the participative research will continue for the rest of the year. Recurrent problems identified were the generalized weakness or absence of the State; cohabitation of the Christian, Muslim and animist religions; cohabitation of Bissau-Guinean and immigrant populations; the use of ethnicity as a strategy to win power; insecurity as an aggravating factor of poor economic performance; and mismanagement of natural resources as a source of deepening poverty.

10. Under the capacity-building programme for parliamentarians funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund and coordinated by UNDP, the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and UNOGBIS organized training in conflict transformation skills from 14 to 18 January 2008 for 15 parliamentarians, including 2 women. Fourteen parliamentarians also attended the leadership training workshop facilitated by SNV from 7 to 11 January. On 19 February, SNV also assisted the National Assembly in facilitating a workshop to promote information exchange between parliamentarians and other stakeholders. It was attended by 15 parliamentarians, 15 civil society representatives, 15 members of the press and 15 representatives of the private sector. Another workshop, funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund, was held on 26 February and discussed items on the agenda of the parliamentary session, including such topics as taxes, local government and female genital mutilation.

11. From 11 to 16 February 2008, SNV and UNOGBIS also facilitated a workshop funded by the Government of the Netherlands on conflict transformation for 11 senior political and military advisers nominated by the Offices of the President and the Prime Minister, the leaders of the parliamentary parties (PAIGC, PRS and PUSD) and the Chief of the General Staff. The aim was to provide the participants with conflict analysis tools; promote mutual confidence and an awareness of the need for interdependence and collaboration; and enhance negotiation principles and practice.

12. UNOGBIS continues to support a project led by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, under its Women in Peacebuilding Programme, aiming at disseminating Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. A workshop on the subject was organized on 18 and 19 December 2007 for 30 participants and broadcast on national radio. The workshop highlighted the need

to increase the participation of women in key national political processes, such as national reconciliation, elections, peace consolidation and socio-economic recovery. Two plans of action were drawn up by the workshop, recommending the increased role of women in reconciliation efforts within the armed forces and creating a women's group to lobby the national authorities to adopt and implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

III. Economic and social aspects

13. During the period under review, the socio-economic situation remained fragile but stable. On 28 January 2008, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Government of Guinea-Bissau signed a one-year two-phase emergency post-conflict assistance facility for $5.6 million. The 2008 programme includes measures focusing on building capacity in revenue administration and public expenditure management. Satisfactory implementation of the programme could pave the way for a poverty reduction growth facility arrangement and eventually debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries programme and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. The IMF Executive Board also extended to Guinea-Bissau interim debt relief which reduces debt servicing by 50 per cent. The World Bank, on 29 January, retroactively extended a similar interim debt relief mechanism that had expired on 15 December 2007. The World Bank is currently preparing an interim strategy note to provide support to Guinea-Bissau in the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy paper. Also, in January, the World Bank provided three generators with a collective capacity of 2.5 megawatts as an interim response to a request by the Government for assistance in addressing the country's critical energy shortage situation.

14. The financial situation remains worrying despite progress under the Government's minimum programme to re-establish fiscal stability, which was agreed in May 2007. The numerous tax reductions and exemptions granted in 2006, which reduced government revenue by 22 per cent in 2007, have been abolished and progress has been made in revenue collection. However, the Government payroll continues to exceed revenues and the Government's inability to pay current salaries on time, combined with rising prices, remains a major source of social tension. On 11 January 2008, the European Commission and the Government signed agreements granting €5.9 million in budgetary support in 2008 and €800,000 for the legislative elections. Portugal contributed €2 million in budgetary support. In accordance with a note signed by China and Guinea-Bissau in November 2006, the two Governments signed a contract on 20 February 2008 for the construction of a government secretariat. China will also build a 150-bed military hospital.

15. The most recent food security monitoring survey indicates that some 14 per cent of rural households are either moderately or severely food insecure. The figures are expected to rise as the lean season, from June to October, approaches. In January 2008, the Government signed the 2008-2012 country programme action plan with UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the 2008-2010 biannual working plan with the World Health Organization. The agreements operationalize the United Nations development assistance framework, which was agreed with the authorities in 2007. UNICEF and the World Food Programme signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government to provide school canteens in an effort to improve the quality

of the learning environment for children. Strikes in the health and education sectors over the non-payment of salary arrears and contractual issues, as well as continued institutional instability in the Ministry of Education, could seriously jeopardize the current school year and disrupt United Nations programmes in the social sectors. Living conditions in the capital have deteriorated owing to extreme water shortages that have persisted for several months. Likewise, the supply of electricity, normally scarce, has now virtually come to a halt, affecting the supply of water. Although the three generators provided by the World Bank have been installed, there has been no significant improvement as the one serviceable generator of the electricity company has broken down.

16. The United Nations country team is initiating the first joint programme on AIDS in Guinea-Bissau and assisting the country in managing a Global Fund grant of $44 million. The country team will continue its efforts to strengthen the supply chain system of antiretroviral drugs and other AIDS-related medical items. Activities relating to the housing census are proceeding, as planned, with the support of UNFPA and UNDP. A pilot survey was conducted in December and the final census operation is planned for June 2008; the project has already encountered a $1.5 million funding gap that must be filled.

17. Following the Security Council's decision on 11 December 2007 to support the inclusion of Guinea-Bissau in the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission met in New York on 19 December, and agreed to include Guinea-Bissau in its agenda and set up a country-specific meeting group on Guinea-Bissau under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations. From 22 to 28 January 2008, a mission of the Peacebuilding Commission, led by Ambassador Maria Viotti of Brazil as Chairperson of the country-specific meeting, visited Guinea-Bissau to initiate discussions with the Government, national stakeholders and international partners on priority areas for assistance to be included in a peacebuilding strategic framework for the country. The mission also examined time deadlines for the development of the framework and the establishment of a national steering committee. On 20 February, the Prime Minister made a presentation at the second formal meeting of the country-specific configuration on Guinea-Bissau in New York on his country's peacebuilding priorities and challenges. These included reform of public administration, consolidation of the rule of law and security sector reforms, promotion of vocational training and youth employment and support for vulnerable groups.

18. The Prime Minister also submitted a number of quick-impact project proposals to the Peacebuilding Commission in the areas of health, energy, the forthcoming legislative elections and youth, with an emphasis on job creation. Those quick-impact projects are under consideration by the Commission for implementation towards the end of March 2008. They would be carried out in tandem with the ongoing calendar of activities for engagement between the Government and the Commission, which will lead to the establishment of a comprehensive strategic framework for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau, expected to be finalized by June 2008. The strategic framework for Guinea-Bissau will draw on priorities already established under existing key national framework documents, such as the poverty reduction strategy paper, the security sector strategy plan and the United Nations development assistance framework. At the end of the country-specific meeting, it was agreed to advise the Secretary-General to declare Guinea-Bissau eligible for

assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund. On 11 March 2008, I wrote to the Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission, informing him of my decision to declare Guinea-Bissau eligible to receive funding from the Peacebuilding Fund.

19. A second high-level delegation from the Peacebuilding Commission is expected to visit Guinea-Bissau early in April 2008. The objectives of that mission would include further consultations with the Government and national stakeholders, and field trips to the regions and provinces of Guinea-Bissau to acquire first-hand knowledge of the situation in the country and current peacebuilding activities and challenges. The Government and the Peacebuilding Commission will also be working on the presentation of a Government priority plan to fit in with the overall peacebuilding strategic framework.

IV. Military and security aspects

20. The security sector reform programme was officially launched at a ceremony at the National Assembly on 23 January 2008. In his speech, the Chief of the General Staff expressed support for the restructuring and modernization of the armed forces, but warned that the reforms should not result in the impoverishment of beneficiaries as such a situation could make them vulnerable to manipulation. The financial convention between the European Commission and the Government for the security sector reform/disarmament, demobilization and reintegration project costing €7.7 million was signed on 22 January 2008. A major awareness campaign on security sector reform was conducted in all regions of the country in December 2007 and January 2008. The events were attended by members of the security sector reform Technical Coordinating Committee, the armed forces reconciliation commission, civil society and UNOGBIS, among others. The independent census of active personnel in the armed forces, which is funded by UNDP, started in mid-February and is expected to be completed by the end of March. The information will be vital for arriving at an accurate figure of active personnel. Three experts funded by the European Commission, under the Instrument for Stability security sector reform project in Guinea-Bissau, are providing advisory services to the Ministry of Defence.

21. The Governments of Guinea-Bissau and Portugal co-hosted the Lisbon International Conference on Drug Trafficking on 19 December 2007 to mobilize $19 million for the anti-narcotics programme developed by the Government of Guinea-Bissau, with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and facilitated by UNOGBIS. The conference raised $6.7 million which will allow for the implementation of emergency actions planned for 2008. On 22 January 2008, UNOGBIS organized a debriefing and follow-up meeting in Bissau, which was attended by Government representatives, international partners and representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The meeting agreed that the Minister of Justice and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime should urgently find an efficient strategic framework to implement the anti-narcotics programme. Synergies and operational cooperation in activities planned under the anti-narcotics programme and the ongoing security sector and judicial reform were discussed at the meeting organized by the European Commission in Brussels on 28 January. Within the framework of the Government-UNDP-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime project and a Government of Brazil-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime initiative, six officers, drawn from the Guinea-

Bissau judicial police, INTERPOL and the public order police left for Brazil to attend a six-month training course organized by the federal police of Brazil. The judicial police, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNOGBIS experts visited a number of facilities in Bissau and surrounding areas with the objective of identifying suitable venues for the installation of a temporary detention centre. In addition to assigning one senior adviser and one senior ad hoc adviser to Bissau in November 2007, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime will appoint a project manager by March 2008, to coordinate its expanding activities in Guinea-Bissau.

22. Meanwhile, on 25 February 2008, Spain and Guinea-Bissau signed an agreement to jointly conduct air and sea patrols along Guinea-Bissau's maritime borders with the objective of combating human trafficking.

23. The National Institute for Educational Studies and Research facilitated workshops with civil society and the military on 19 and 21 December 2007 to raise awareness on issues linked to small arms and light weapons, and to elicit suggestions on possible arms collection schemes. The activities were carried out within the framework of the workplan of the National Commission against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. A mission from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat travelled to Guinea-Bissau from 21 to 25 January 2008 to assess the progress made by the Commission towards drawing up a plan of action, which includes a pilot project. National non-governmental organizations linked to the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms are also supporting activities to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

24. In January 2008, the authorities arrested two Mauritanians in Bissau who were wanted by the Mauritanian authorities for the alleged murder of four French citizens in Mauritania. The Mauritanians, who claimed to be members of Al-Qaida, were subsequently extradited to Mauritania. Following that development, the Government expressed serious concern about an emerging threat of terrorism in the country. On 22 February, my Representative met with the Chairperson of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to underline the concern of the Government on this matter.

V. Human rights aspects

25. UNOGBIS human rights officers have noted that the country's serious water shortages have especially affected prisoners, who are detained in deplorable conditions and face a lack of food, poor sanitation and abuse of preventive detention provisions. The International Federation for Human Rights dispatched a team to Guinea-Bissau from 7 to 16 January 2008 to look into reports of a deteriorating environment for human rights and press freedom, particularly with regard to reporting on drug issues. This follows allegations that journalists have been threatened for reporting on suspected drug trafficking activities in the country.

VI. Observations and recommendations

26. The Government of Guinea-Bissau has continued to make tangible progress in engaging the international community in its efforts to put in place the urgent

reforms necessary for sustainable political and economic stabilization, with a view to offering its citizens a better life. In this regard, I welcome the inclusion of Guinea-Bissau in the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission and the signing of the emergency post-conflict assistance programme with IMF. Both developments demonstrate the renewed commitment of the international community to support Guinea-Bissau's peacebuilding efforts.

27. I am encouraged at the momentum generated since the country was placed on the Commission's agenda on 19 December 2007. This positive outcome has been the culmination of months of hard work and commitment on the part of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, working in close collaboration with its partners, including the United Nations system, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, among others. The Commission's engagement with Guinea-Bissau will provide valuable assistance in post-conflict reconstruction and the consolidation of peace. Now that Guinea-Bissau has been declared eligible for funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, I urge the Government and its partners to engage actively to move the process forward, especially in setting up the national steering committee and implementing quick-impact projects. I commend all the partners who have demonstrated their interest and readiness to work with the country to promote sustainable stability, and appeal to the international community as a whole for continued and increased support for Guinea-Bissau's multifaceted peacebuilding challenges.

28. It is important that the various initiatives to assist the country dovetail so that limited resources are used to maximum effect. The question of process and coordination between the Government and donors therefore needs to be addressed if the resources are to be effectively and efficiently used to achieve the expected results. I have directed my Representative, together with the United Nations country team, to spare no efforts in ensuring the needed synergies in this regard. It is also imperative that the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding be nationally owned. In this regard, I urge the Peacebuilding Support Office to ensure wide consultation with all stakeholders, including civil society, during the elaboration of the Strategic Framework.

29. As noted in my last report to the Council, the legislative elections of 2008 will be a major benchmark for the state of democratic governance in the country. I encourage the authorities to set a date for the polls as a first step towards creating a climate of confidence in the credibility of the process. I urge the international community to provide resources for the elections, including resources to cover arrears from past democratic elections. I have directed the United Nations to continue providing the necessary technical support in the preparations for the elections.

30. I would also like to commend the authorities for launching the security sector reform process, which constitutes a key element in the Government's priorities under the auspices of a wider public administration reform programme. This is a long-term and complex process which will require cooperation among all stakeholders, including international cooperation partners. The reforms represent key structural policies whose successful implementation would affect the ability of the State to deliver on its poverty reduction strategy.

31. A comprehensive and effective security sector reform process in Guinea-Bissau would, furthermore, serve as the long-term framework for a concerted strategy against drug trafficking in the country. I therefore appeal to the international community to provide enhanced support and training for Guinea-Bissau's law enforcement and criminal justice system within the wider framework of security sector reform and the fight against organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism. I commend the Government and international partners for the successful organization, in December 2007, of the Lisbon International Conference on Drug Trafficking in Guinea-Bissau. I urge the Government and international partners to work together to formulate an effective follow-up process to the Lisbon Conference, especially aimed at mobilizing additional resources for the comprehensive implementation of the operational plan. I believe also that integration of Guinea-Bissau's national anti-narcotic effort in a subregional approach is essential and I look forward to a positive outcome from the planned ECOWAS regional conference on drug trafficking in West Africa.

32. Guinea-Bissau has made important progress in the period under review but much more remains to be done to make the process of reform irreversible. Success will depend not only on continuing collaboration between the Government and its partners, but also, above all, on the people of Guinea-Bissau themselves demonstrating the resolve to place national interest above narrow personal or partisan ambitions.

33. I should like to conclude by commending the staff of UNOGBIS, under the leadership of my Representative, Shola Omoregie, as well as the personnel of the entire United Nations country team, for the important work they continue to carry out in Guinea-Bissau, often under challenging circumstances.